

Message Text

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PASS AGRICULTURE

E.O. 11652: N/A
TAGS: EAGR UK
SUBJECT: UK AGRICULTURE MINISTER WARNS EC OF TOUGH
BRITISH ATTITUDE ON PIGMEAT MCA'S
BEGIN SUMMARY: ON JANUARY 11, 1978 UK AGRICULTURE
MINISTER SILKIN, ADDRESSING FARMERS CLUB, WARNED DENMARK
AND THE NETHERLANDS THAT HE WILL TAKE TOUGH LINE IN
FORTHCOMING EC FARM PRICE REVIEW UNLESS MCA PIGMEAT
ARRANGEMENTS ARE CHANGED. SILKIN REFUSED TO NAME DATE
OR AMOUNT FOR GREEN POUND DEVALUATION. END SUMMARY.
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1. ON JANUARY 11, 1978 UK MINISTER OF AGRICULTURE
SILKIN RETURNED AGAIN TO SUBJECT OF PIGMEAT MCA'S WHICH
IS ABOUT THE ONLY QUESTION WHERE THERE IS AGREEMENT
BETWEEN HMG AND FARMERS. FOR MORE THAN A YEAR UK PIG
FARMERS HAVE COMPLAINED THAT METHOD OF CALCULATING
PIGMEAT MCA'S IS CAUSING THEM HEAVY LOSSES BECAUSE

DANISH AND TO SOME EXTENT DUTCH BACON CURERS ARE ABLE TO UNDERCUT BRITISH PRODUCERS BY AS MUCH AS 70 POUNDS PER TON BELOW COST OF PRODUCING BRITISH BACON. IN JANUARY 11 SPEECH, SILKIN WARNED DENMARK AND HOLLAND THAT CONTINUED INTRANSIGENCE ON THEIR PART AGAINST REVISION OF METHOD OF CALCULATING PIGMEAT MCA'S COULD LEAD TO UK BLOCKAGE OF 1978-79 EC FARM PRICE PACKAGE. SILKIN CLAIMED FRANCE AND ITALY SUPPORT THE UK BUT HE WARNED THERE WAS NO SIMPLE WAY OF PERSUADING THOSE COUNTRIES WHOSE NARROW NATIONAL INTEREST WAS OPPOSED TO UK ON THIS QUESTION TO CHANGE THEIR MINDS.

2. ON WIDER SUBJECT OF GREEN POUND AND MCA'S IN GENERAL, HOWEVER, SILKIN REFUSED TO GIVE ANY DEFINITE INDICATION OF WHEN THE GREEN POUND DEVALUATION WOULD TAKE PLACE OR BY HOW MUCH. HE POINTED OUT THAT WIDER NATIONAL INTEREST AND THE CONTINUED FIGHT AGAINST INFLATION WERE MORE IMPORTANT THAN GIVING BRITISH FARMERS HIGHER PRICES.

3. SILKIN BLAMED HEATH GOVERNMENT OF 1970-74 FOR SOME OF UK'S PRESENT DIFFICULTIES WITH THE REMAINDER OF THE EC. HE SAID THE HEATH GOVERNMENT WAS SO EAGER TO GET THE UK INTO THE COMMUNITY THAT THE ACHIEVEMENT OF A SATISFACTORY AGRICULTURE AND FISHERIES POLICY MORE SUITABLE TO BRITISH INTERESTS HAD BEEN MADE VERY DIFFICULT.

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COMMENT: SILKIN'S JANUARY 11 SPEECH WAS BY AND LARGE ALMOST A MIRROR IMAGE OF SPEECHES GIVEN THIS TIME LAST YEAR (SEE LONDON 19927, DECEMBER 9, 1976) WHEN HE COVERED THE SAME POINTS IN ALMOST THE SAME TERMS. QUESTIONS TO SILKIN ON JANUARY 11 WERE MOREOVER ALSO NEARLY IDENTICAL WITH THOSE OF A YEAR AGO. THEY AGAIN ACCUSED HIM OF GIVING TOO MUCH EMPHASIS TO HIS ROLE AS MINISTER OF FOOD AND NOT ENOUGH TO THAT AS MINISTER OF AGRICULTURE. HIS REPLIES WERE ALSO THE SAME IN SAYING THAT THE TWO ROLES ARE INSEPARABLE AND THAT THE INTERESTS OF THE CONSUMER AND THE FARMER ARE IN THE LONG RUN INSEPARABLE; IT IS NOT IN THE BEST INTERESTS OF FARMERS TO PRODUCE FOOD AT PRICES WHICH CONSUMERS CANNOT AFFORD TO PAY.

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